

Message Text

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TO ALL AMERICAN REPUBLIC DIPLOMATIC POSTS

USCINCSO FOR POLAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 216985

FOLLOWING BOGOTA 8556 SENT STATE RPT TO YOU QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 8556

E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: PFOR OAS CO

SUBJECT: COLOMBIAN FOREIGN MINISTER EXPLAINS HIS PURPOSE IN
CALLING A MEETING OF THE LATIN AMERICAN FOREIGN MINISTERS

DEPT PASS APPROPRIATE ARA POSTS

REF: BOGOTA 8543

SUMMARY: THE FOREIGN MINISTER OF COLOMBIA HAS INVITED
ALL HEMISPHERIC FOREIGN MINISTERS WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE
UNITED STATES, CANADA, AND CUBA TO A CONFERENCE IN BOGOTA
NOVEMBER 14 TO 16 TO PREPARE FOR A SUBSEQUENT CONFERENCE
WITH THE SECRETARY. VAZQUEZ BELIEVES THE INITIATIVE COULD
RESULT IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ORGAN OF CONSULTATION,
PROBABLY OUTSIDE THE OAS FRAMEWORK. VAZQUEZ THINKS THAT WITH A
NEW GOVERNMENT IN CHILE THE TIME MAY BE PROPITIOUS FOR AN END TO
SPEECHES AND BOMBAST AND THE BEGINNING OF CONSTRUCTIVE
DIALOGUE WITH A VIEW TO HARMONIZING THE RELATIONSHIPS
BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND LATIN AMERICA. VAZQUEZ BELIEVES
THE MEETING BETWEEN THE SECRETARY AND THE LATIN AMERICAN
FOREIGN MINISTERS SHOULD TAKE PLACE IN LATIN AMERICA.
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END SUMMARY.

1. I MET WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTER AT HIS REQUEST ON THE
MORNING OF OCTOBER 16. AFTER PRELIMINARY COURTESIES, HE

HANDED ME A COPY OF HIS TELEGRAM TO HEMISPHERIC FOREIGN MINISTERS EXCLUDING ONLY THE U.S. CANADA AND CUBA, INVITING THEM TO A MEETING IN BOGOTA FROM THE 14TH TO THE 16TH OF NOVEMBER (SEE REFTEL).

2. VAZQUEZ THEN LAUCHED INTO AN EXPLANATION OF WHY HE HAD CALLED THIS CONFERENCE PREPARATORY TO MEETING WITH THE SECRETARY. THE EXPLANATION WENT ALONG THE FOLLOWING LINES: ANY REFORM OF THE CHARTER OF THE OAS IS AT LEAST TWO TO THREE YEARS AWAY. MEANWHILE THERE ARE NOT ONLY PRESSING INTRA-REGIONAL PROBLEMS BUT ALSO PROBLEMS ARISING IN INTERNATIONAL FORUMS SUCH AS GATT AND UNCTAD. IT WOULD BE USEFUL AND PRUDENT FOR THE U.S. AND LATIN AMERICA TO SEEK AREAS OF COMMON INTEREST PRIOR TO ATTENDING THESE INTERNATIONAL GATHERINGS. THE PURPOSE OF THE PROPOSED BOGOTA MEETINGS OF HEMISPHERIC FOREIGN MINISTERS IS TO PREPARE AN AGENDA, FIND AREAS OF AGREEMENT IN ORDER NOT TO WASTE THE SECRETARY'S TIME IN AN UNCOORDINATED AND INCHOATE MEETING. LATIN AMERICANS TEND TO BE CHAOTIC AND LACKING GUIDANCE AND PLANNING MEETINGS QUICKLY DISINTEGRATE.

3. I POINTED OUT TO VAZQUEZ THAT WHILE I UNDERSTOOD HIS REASONS FOR WANTING A PRELIMINARY CONFERENCE, I BELIEVED THAT THERE MIGHT BE CONSIDERABLE RISK THAT SUCH A MEETING WOULD RESULT IN A SET OF HARD AND FAST POSITIONS, WITH THE DANGER OF THE GOVERNMENT HOLDING THE MOST EXTREME POSITION TENDING TO PREVAIL. VAZQUEZ RESPONDED THAT HE APPRECIATED THAT FEAR BUT WITH A NEW GOVERNMENT IN CHILE THAT PROBLEM WAS NOW MUCH LESS ACUTE. HE POINTED OUT THAT THE U.S. HAS DONE VERY WELL IN AVOIDING CONFRONTATIONS WITH GOVERNMENTS SUCH AS PERU AND ARGENTINA, AND BELIEVED MANY LATIN AMERICAN STATES ARE BEGINNING TO UNDERSTAND THAT SPEECHES AND RESOLUTIONS WHICH ALIENATE THE U.S. ARE AT BEST USELESS AND AT WORST HARMFUL. VAZQUEZ ADDED WITH A WRY SMILE THAT HE BELIEVES HE HAS NOW ESTABLISHED HIS CREDENTIALS WITH THE MORE RADICAL OF THE LATIN AMERICAN FOREIGN MINISTERS.

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4. VAZQUEZ EMPHASIZED THAT THE LAST THING HE WANTED TO DO WAS TO PUT THE U.S. ON THE SPOT. HE INSISTED THAT HE AND OTHERS WHO BELIEVE AS HE DOES COULD BE VERY USEFUL TO THE UNITED STATES AT THIS JUNCTURE. HE THEN BEGAN TO DEVELOP AGAIN THE THEME THAT LATIN AMERICA AND THE UNITED STATES MUST CREATE SOME CHANNEL OF COMMUNICATION THAT COULD AVOID THE TRADITIONAL OAS PATTERNS WHICH HAVE BECOME SO CLOGGED AND FORMALISTIC THAT THEY SERVE LITTLE PURPOSE. I INTERRUPTED VAZQUEZ TO ASK IF HE HAD IN MIND THAT HIS INITIATIVE AND THE SUBSEQUENT MEETING WITH THE SECRETARY WOULD RESULT IN AN ALTERNATE ORGAN OF CONSULTATION. HE RESPONDED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE AND SAID THAT THERE ARE A GREAT MANY PRESSING PROBLEMS, NOT ONLY THOSE BETWEEN LATIN AMERICA AND THE U.S., BUT OTHERS WHICH ARE NOT SUSCEPTIBLE TO OAS

SOLUTIONS. AS AN EXAMPLE, HE CITED VENEZUELA'S PROBLEMS WITH GUYANA. VENEZUELA, HE SAID, WOULD NEVER ALLOW GUYANA INTO THE OAS AND THEREFORE THERE IS NO WAY OF BRINGING MULTI-LATERAL PRESSURES TO BEAR ON BOTH COUNTRIES, BUT THAT THROUGH THE MECHANISM HE HAS IN MIND IT IS ENTIRELY POSSIBLE A SOLUTION COULD BE ACHIEVED.

5. I MENTIONED THAT I HAD SPOKEN TO GALO PLAZA WHO THOUGHT THAT THE FOREIGN MINISTERS PLANNED A MEETING WITH THE SECRETARY IN DECEMBER. I POINTED OUT THE DIFFICULTY OF PREPARING FOR SUCH AN IMPORTANT MEETING IN SUCH A SHORT TIME. VAZQUEZ SAID THAT HE HAD NOT FIXED ON ANY ONE DATE, THAT JANUARY OR FEBRUARY WOULD ALSO BE ACCEPTABLE. WHAT WAS IMPORTANT, VAZQUEZ SAID, WAS THAT THE INITIATIVE SHOULD RESULT IN A THREE-STAGE CYCLE- "FIRST, THE PREPARATORY MEETING AMONG THE LATIN AMERICAN MINISTERS: SECONDLY, A TIME FOR DELIBERATION AND RETHINKING OF WHAT HAD TAKEN PLACE; AND THIRDLY, THE MEETING OF THE LATIN AMERICAN FOREIGN MINISTERS WITH THE SECRETARY".

6. IT BECAME APPARENT DURING THE CONVERSATION THAT VAZQUEZ WANTS THE MEETING WITH THE SECRETARY TO TAKE PLACE IN LATIN AMERICA (ANDPROBABLY BOGOTA). I DREW HIM OUT ON THIS POINT AND HE SAID THAT A MEETING IN LATIN AMERICA WOULD PROVIDE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE SECRETARY TO DRAMATIZE A RENEWED U.S. INTEREST IN THE CONTINENT.

7. VAZQUEZ EMPHASIZED SEVERAL TIMES THAT IT WAS NOT NECESSARY FOR THE SECRETARY TO COME TO THE CONFERENCE WITH FIRM POSITIONS IN RESPONSE TO THE LATIN INITIATIVES AND CONCERNS. HE ASSERTED CONFIDENTIAL

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THAT IF THE SECRETARY CAME TO LATIN AMERICA, MET WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTERS AND RESPONDED IN AN OPEN AND INTERESTED MANNER TO THEIR VARIOUS PROBLEMS "THAT ALONE COULD BEGIN A NEW ERA IN OUR RELATIONSHIPS".

8. VAZQUEZ VOLUNTARILY PROMISED TO KEEP IN FREQUENT TOUCH AS THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE CONFERENCE DEVELOPED. AS I COULD NOT STATE THAT WE WELCOMED THIS INITIATIVE, I DID REPEAT THE COMMENT CONTAINED IN THE VERY USEFUL DEPTTEL 199639.

9. COMMENT-VAZQUEZ IS OBVIOUSLY DELIGHTED WITH HIMSELF AND WITH WHAT HE REGARDS AS HIS INITIATIVE. AS THE FOREIGN MINISTER OF VENEZUELA, CALVANI, IS HERE, I AM CERTAIN VAZQUEZ HAS DISCUSSED THIS WITH HIM AND BELIEVES THAT HE HAS HIS WHOLE-HEARTED SUPPORT. VAZQUEZ MENTIONED THAT HE HAS ALREADY RECEIVED ACCEPTANCES FROM MEXICO, GUATEMALA, COSTA RICA, AND ECUADOR, AMONG OTHERS.

10. AT THIS POINT, IT IS CLEAR THAT THE GOC IS FIRMLY COMMITTED TO VAZQUEZ PROPOSAL AND THAT A MEETING OF SOME SCOPE, ALONG THE LINES HE PROPOSES, WILL TAKE PLACE IN BOGOTA. GIVEN THE NEAR CERTAINTY OF THE EVENT AND IN VIEW OF VAZQUEZ

READINESS TO CONSULT WITH US, I BELIEVE THAT WE WOULD HAVE
LITTLE TO LOSE AND MUCH TO GAIN BY ENCOURAGING
VAZQUEZ TO GO AHEAD AND URGING HIM TO DO HIS BEST TO MODERATE
THE EXTREMES AND EXPAND THE INFLUENCE OF THE CENTRIST GROUP.
SUCH ENCOURAGEMENT WOULD OF COURSE IMPLY THE SECRETARY'S WILLING-
NESS IN PRINCIPLE TO ATTEND A SUBSEQUENT CONFERENCE AT AN
UNSPECIFIED PLACE AND TIME.

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